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Ford Orders Lebanon Evacuation

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President Ford last night ordered the evacuation of all non-official Americans from strife-torn Lebanon, probably by motor convoy to Syria, beginning early tomorrow.

The decision emerged from a 90-minute meeting Ford held in the White House with Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger, CIA Director George Bush, Deputy Defense Secretary William P. Clements Jr. and National Security Council Director Brent Scowcroft. The decision was prompted by the murders of Ambassador Francis E. Meloy Jr. and embassy economic counselor Robert O. Waring and by the growing chaos of the Lebanese civil war, officials said.

The U.S. Embassy in Beirut will remain open.

A State Department spokesman said in a statement early today,

"Due to the continued uncertainty of the situation in Beirut, the President has directed the U.S. Embassy there to organize the departure of an overland convoy of U.S. citizens who wish to depart at this time. Only those embassy officials not essential are leaving."

WHITE HOUSE Press Secretary Ronald Nessen and Kissinger gave no hint of the evacuation decision when the meeting broke up at 7 p.m.,

describing the session only as a "thorough review" of the situation. However, The Washington Star learned that the President and his advisers ordered the Voice of America to begin broadcasting at about midnight the news that the U.S. government wanted to offer all American private citizens in Lebanon an opportunity to get out.

The VOA is a principal source of information for Americans living overseas and Ford's top advisers de-

cided VOA broadcasts were the only reliable method of spreading Washington's decision amid the chaos in Lebanon. VOA's message was advisory, not mandatory, for the estimated 1,400 to 1,800 American citizens believed to be in Beirut and other parts of the divided country.

National security officials and the President considered variations of four or more options for accomplishing the evacuation: a sealift from Lebanese ports; a charter airplane shuttle from Beirut international airport; a motor convoy from points in Lebanon to the safety of Syria; and a helicopter lift by the U.S. Marines and Navy vessels who are tying off the Lebanese coast in event of further deterioration in Lebanon's internecine warfare.

DESPITE THE deployment of cooperative Syrian warships in blockade formation outside Leba-

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